

# Reorganizing to make us Better

## INSIDE

### Counting Successes, Looking Ahead



Jack Davis,  
Deputy Minister of Executive Council

Now that we've crossed the midpoint of 1999, with the clock ticking toward the new millennium, I thought I'd take this opportunity to acknowledge some of our successes and elaborate on our reorganizing plans to position the Alberta Government for the 21st century.

To date, it's been an extremely productive year and the first thing I want to do is thank all of you for your continuing contributions. After all, it's your hard work and leadership that is clearly making the difference, placing us in an enviable position nationwide. This year's record number of recipients at the annual Premier's Award of Excellence ceremony is tangible evidence of your exceptional commitment to client service and business excellence. And the second payment of Achievement Bonus awards is further proof of our success in

meeting and exceeding business plan goals and our goals around teamwork, innovation and human resource management.

What I'd like to do now is touch on the matter of reorganization, the biggest since Premier Klein took office in 1992. Announced on May 25, it marked a realignment of government to reflect Albertans' priorities for the new millennium. The realignment is designed to accomplish the following: refocus government priorities, continue to improve efficiency and help departments to work together in more integrated ways.

As the Premier noted, the reorganization is not focused on downsizing or expenditure reductions. The key objective is on improvements to service and program delivery through better organization and interdepartmental teamwork. It means taking a coordinated and collaborative approach. For example, information technology is an area where we want to have a corporate strategy that ensures the government's major information technology networks and applications are based on government wide standards with options for department flexibility. What we are trying to do together is to be innovative in developing shared cross-government services, to gain efficiencies and increase productivity. Benefits realized can then be reallocated to concentrate on core businesses and activities

where government has an important role. In a nutshell, we want to move full steam ahead in examining alternative ways to manage the business of government better.

The Government Reorganization Secretariat, chaired by the Honourable Steve West, will review and approve all departmental reorganization plans. The Secretariat is supported by our Senior Officials Transition Team. Department reorganization plans are due by the end of August. In September and October the plans will be reviewed with final approvals given to departments in the fall.

In terms of staffing matters, the Honourable Steve West has reiterated the Premier's message that the reorganization is not about downsizing and that we will work hard to find jobs for any affected employees. The Public Service Commissioner, Jim Dixon, and the Personnel Administration Office will provide all necessary support during the transition. Again, I believe we have the opportunity to be leaders nationwide in the effective operation of government.

On that note, I'd like to thank you again for your efforts and wish you an enjoyable summer. I'd say, looking at Alberta's list of accomplishments, it's well deserved.

## Premier's Award of Excellence



"No one can top what you're achieving here in Alberta," Klein told the award recipients. "Your commitment to doing the best possible job for your fellow Albertans, combined with your remarkable energy and enthusiasm, has allowed Alberta to establish a new standard for government programs and services."



"It's been a record-setting year for the Premier's Award of Excellence," said Human Resources and Employment Minister Clint Dunford, who is also the minister responsible for the Personnel Administration Office. "More than 50 teams from across the province made submissions. It says a lot about the energy, the enthusiasm and the work ethic in our public service."

The 1999 edition of the Premier's **Award of Excellence** ceremony reached new heights with a record number of awards going to government employees for their superior efforts on behalf of Albertans. Pages 2 - 3.

Find Connexus on the new  
Personnel Administration  
Office Web site under  
Management Information

[www.gov.ab.ca/pao](http://www.gov.ab.ca/pao)



# 1999 Premier's Award of Excellence Honors Outstanding Service



Ask Pat Blakney how her team came to win a gold award during the 1999 Premier's Award of Excellence and she'll tell you: "We worked our buns off." Blakney, acting executive director for the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta Community Development and one of the team leaders of the International Association for Volunteer Effort's 15th Biennial World Volunteer Conference project (IAVE '98), may chuckle when she says it, but when she explains that her team worked hard she means it.

IAVE '98 was held in Edmonton last August, and with more than 2700 delegates from 92 countries in attendance, it was the largest global volunteer conference ever held — anywhere. It was also one of five gold award recipients at this year's Premier's Award of Excellence ceremony held June 21st at the Shaw Conference Centre.

Originating in 1995, the award recognizes excellence in client service and business practices in Alberta's public service. This year saw the most achievers ever. In fact, with 34 of a record 52 submissions receiving bronze, silver or gold awards, more than two-thirds of the entries turned out to be recipients.

A gold award also went to Alberta Health's Laboratory Medicine Competency Project, led by senior team leader, Art

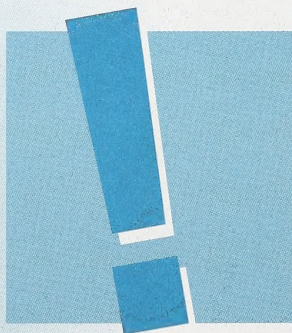
McIntyre. Dr. Bill DuPerron, principal consultant, Health Workforce Education and Planning, was part of the team that created the first ever performance standards for all tasks performed in medical laboratories. According to DuPerron, this groundbreaking project involved more than 160 technical experts in seven different areas. The magnitude of the project was immense and has attracted substantial interest from regulatory bodies, professional groups and employers throughout North America. It also garnered the interest of judges, serving as a prime example of some of the exciting projects and processes happening in provincial departments.

Other top projects included Alberta Family and Social Services' Yellowhead Family Support Program, the first time a natural work team has ever been a gold recipient; Alberta Municipal Affairs' Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS)/Canshare Project that converted an existing information system into a money-saving venture; and Construct Projects Re-Engineering, Alberta Transportation and Utilities' challenge that made outsourcing a success. In total, 15 different departments submitted a wide variety of entries. Many of the submissions outlined strategies that helped teams achieve ambitious goals, from streamlin-

ing processes to saving money to attaining "firsts" in their fields. Remarkably, these record-setting number of teams were able to perform their tasks in the face of an uncertain and challenging era.

Receiving a Premier's Award of Excellence is a prestigious accomplishment, bringing welcome recognition and inspiration to dedicated team members who have done an outstanding job. For teams that entered and took home awards, striving for excellence is becoming commonplace. Team members understand that the longest lasting satisfaction comes from knowing the work they're doing makes a difference in the lives of Albertans — every day. ■

For additional information on award recipients, check the PAO Web site at <http://www.gov.ab.ca/pao/programs/rewards/premier/frame-set.htm>



Here are a few examples of some of the projects completed by the award achieving teams:

- facilitating more than \$230 million of new investment projects
- implementing a consumer affairs tracking system, saving taxpayers \$400,000
- developing new standards for medical labs, marking the first time anywhere in the world this has been achieved
- organizing and hosting the largest global volunteer conference ever held
- creating a better fuel tax system, resulting in cost savings for the trucking industry
- improving customer service, to better respond to 330,000 corporate registration searches annually
- conducting seminars about parenting after separation, a first of its kind in Canada
- and launching a program about child safety with more than 75,000 children participating.

# Making Alberta stronger



# 1999 Premier's Award of Excellence Recipients

## GOLD

**International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)  
1998 World Volunteer Conference**  
Alberta Community Development

**Yellowhead Family Support Program**  
Alberta Family and Social Services

**Laboratory Medicine Competency Project**  
Alberta Health

**Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS)/  
Canshare Project** – Alberta Municipal Affairs

**Construct Projects Re-Engineering**  
Alberta Transportation and Utilities

## SILVER

**Canada-Alberta Environmentally Sustainable  
Agriculture Agreement – Agriculture Impact on Water  
Quality** – Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

**Investment Development**  
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

**1-800 Seniors Information Line**  
Alberta Community Development

**A Traveller's Guide to Geological Wonders and Field  
Guide to Alberta Birds** – Alberta Community Development

**Monthly Statement Process Project** – Alberta Energy

**Alberta Child Health Benefit Program Implementation  
Project** – Alberta Family and Social Services

**Partnership Core Standards and Accreditation**  
Alberta Family and Social Services

**Reaching for the Stars Consumer Conference Project**  
Alberta Family and Social Services

**Alberta Health Information Strategic Plan**  
Alberta Health

**New Models in Continuing Care Demonstration  
Project** – Alberta Health

**The Employment Standards Consolidated Telephone  
Unit** – Alberta Labour

**Lodge Standards Project** – Alberta Municipal Affairs

**Employee Support and Recovery Assistance Program  
(ESRA)** – Alberta Personnel Administration Office

**Management Rewards Strategy**  
Alberta Personnel Administration Office

**Dispute Resolution Process**  
Alberta Transportation and Utilities

**Walk the Talk About Back to School Safety Program**  
Alberta Transportation and Utilities

## BRONZE

**A Vision for the Future**  
Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

**Intake and Complaint Assessment Project**  
Alberta Community Development

**"Rejuvenation": The Jubilee Auditoria Operational  
Partnership** – Alberta Community Development

**Provincial Student Evaluation Programs**  
Alberta Education

**Fire Communications Team**  
Alberta Environmental Protection

**Jumpingpound Demonstration Forest**  
Alberta Environmental Protection

**Oil Sands Mining End Land Use Committee**  
Alberta Environmental Protection

**Wildlife Corridors Project Team**  
Alberta Environmental Protection

**Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee**  
Alberta Family and Social Services

**Parenting After Separation Seminars**  
Alberta Justice & Alberta Family and Social Services

**CORES – Using Innovation to Improve Customer  
Service** – Alberta Municipal Affairs

**Alberta Transportation and Utilities Department  
Wellness Committee** – Alberta Transportation and Utilities

**International Fuel Tax Agreement** – Alberta Treasury



Presentation of the Gold Team Award to IAVE 1998 World Volunteer Conference, Alberta Community Development



Presentation of the Gold Team Award to Yellowhead Family Support Program, Alberta Family and Social Services



Presentation of the Gold Team Award to Laboratory Medicine Competency Project, Alberta Health



Presentation of the Gold Team Award to Consumer Affairs Tracking System (CATS)/Canshare Project, Alberta Municipal Affairs



Presentation of the Gold Team Award to Construct Projects Re-Engineering, Alberta Transportation and Utilities

Congratulations!



# Top Achievers – One Year Later

**"We have been very critical of ourselves, but have learned we do some things very well. Now we need to look at how we can do things better."**

June 16, 1998, was a special day for members of 19 teams across the Alberta public service. It was the day that proved to be the culmination of countless hours of hard work in putting together a submission for the annual Premier's Award of Excellence. Although each of these 19 teams went home an award recipient at the end of the day, there was more to be gained beyond the Premier's award.

Silver recipient Ken Gurski, a team leader for Family and Social Services' Alberta Job Corps, views what has happened as a year-long learning experience. "The process of writing the submission was a great team-building venture. It rallied everyone around a common cause." Gurski's team, along with co-leader Dan Edinga, volunteered many hours after normal working days were over. Where once they simply "drifted

into a practice," they now document everything for continuous improvement purposes and have become far more focused on the process. "Everything out of the ordinary is analyzed to determine how it should be handled. For example, suggestions and complaints are now presented at bi-weekly meetings to determine what to do with them. They have become an active part of the process, not just put in a file and lost."

Gurski also believes that the award has made the team more visible, which has given members an excellent opportunity to teach others. As others approach the team to find out what happened, and how to meet submission requirements, Gurski is able to see first hand the ripple-effect this process has created. To Gurski, what was learned a year ago has continued to make the team better and has presented opportunities to enable others to follow the same path.

The story started off as a different one for Bob Gibson, one of the team leaders and a silver recipient for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Food Processing Development Centre. For Gibson, much of the learning was from a very personal view. He had just taken on an acting management role, "so it was a huge help in just learning how the Centre worked." Now, for Gibson, the number one benefit was the review committee report. A year later, he's found the future considerations indicated by the report very useful. "We were lacking in measurements and industry involvement with evaluation. This year, we've managed to deal with some of those issues during our business planning cycle. We made sure to pay attention to this weak area." The process has helped "shed light on how to work more effectively." The team is now rated, measured and evaluated by industry. It has also established "an evaluation form for clients that is a direct result of the committee's feedback. We weren't giving client input the priority it should have had, but we are now working in that direction."

For team leader Bob Mazurik, the process for Environmental Protection's bronze award for the Wildland Firefighting Units, "gave us a different perspective on how to work together. Having an outside person looking at our work was a positive experience, particularly knowing they were past PAE recipients."

Mazurik's experience, after going through a reorganization last winter, was to see the team membership change, and temporarily fall back on what they were familiar with. Now they need to look at how they can improve things again. "We have been very critical of ourselves, but have learned we do some things very well. Now we need to look at how we can do things better."

For each of these individuals, the process was positive. Some of the learning was immediate, some of it ongoing and some of it a friendly reminder that there's always more that can be done. But with all three, there's one thing they have in common. They all came out ahead, not just on June 16, 1998, but for today and tomorrow as well. ■

## Premier's Praise

Several senior officials and managers were spotted during the June 24 festivities at the legislature that marked Alberta's net debt being eliminated. Here's part of what the Premier said: "...I want to take a few moments to thank the members of the public service of Alberta for their immeasurable contributions to this milestone. Over the last six years or so, the men and women of the public service have constantly challenged themselves to deliver services in more effective and innovative ways. They've responded well to the difficulties of downsizing, of reorganization, and of constant change. Through it all, they've never taken their eyes

off the ball—they've always kept service to Albertans as their number one priority, and they've never let us down. So, to all the public servants here today—thank you. Thank you for your dedication, your smart ideas, and your unlimited energy in the service of the province over the last few years. That thank you extends to those in the public sector not here today—the nurses, the teachers, the police officers, the caretakers, the dietary aides, and the thousands of others who worked together to ensure a stable and prosperous tomorrow for Albertans. They, too, deserve our gratitude..."



# Update on Priorities

A year has come and gone, and like everything else, the Alberta public service has been on the move. Some new priorities have been identified for 1999/00, but what happened to the priorities for the last fiscal year?

Near the end of 1998/99, an external review team, chaired by Ric Forest of PCL Construction Management Inc., was asked to evaluate the APS's first venture into cross-government priorities. The team was "greatly impressed by the amount of effort and achievement made on all four of the major priorities," which included shared services, People and Prosperity, children's services, and the corporate human resource development strategy. Following is a synopsis of some of the accomplishments.

## Shared Services

The goal was to have all Alberta government business plans focus directly on meeting the changing needs of Albertans. Ministries are in fact becoming more responsive, effective and efficient, by adopting new technologies and developing new business practices. A commitment to service innovation through the sharing of services has been clearly demonstrated:

- twelve new initiatives have been identified that have created service efficiencies, greater employee satisfaction and better communication between sharing departments
- existing shared services have been strengthened and enhanced, establishing a base for developing further shared service relationships
- and government-wide corporate standards and shared services for guiding information technology have been drafted.

## People and Prosperity

The goal was to have all Albertans develop and apply their knowledge, skills, and talents to full potential, resulting in competent, confident, self-renewing people who contribute and share in Alberta's economic prosperity. Results include the following:

- access to information on emerging work trends, knowledge and skill requirements, learning opportunities, entrepreneurship, and workplace human resource practices has improved for Albertans, much of this due to enhanced or new Web sites and the publication and distribution of more materials
- promotion of continuous learning for economic opportunity clearly indicated that adults furthering their training or education were very satisfied with the experience
- increased opportunities for young people to prepare for successful participation in work, primarily through career and technology programs and apprenticeships
- revisions to existing programs such as AISH and the establishment of new frameworks and collaborative approaches, to help Albertans overcome barriers to employment
- building healthy, productive, innovative workplaces by employers, employees, and unions working together, using collaborative approaches and best practices
- and revisions to programs delivered by learning institutions and mobility provisions of the Agreement on Internal Trade, allow Albertans to

make better use of their education and skills in the global economy.

## Children's Services

All ministries in government have a role in ensuring that Alberta's children thrive in a healthy, safe, supportive environment and that they have access to quality services and resources in their communities:

- partnering ministries are providing joint responses to support the authorities
- the children's business plan is now in place
- several initiatives are underway, including fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect, children's mental health, children with special health needs in schools, and children involved in prostitution
- and a formula for dispute resolution on funding and on policy/jurisdictional issues is in place to ensure access to services for children.

## Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy

This strategy is intended to respond to demographic pressures, growing competition for scarce human resources, and rapidly changing skills needed to ensure the Alberta public service continues to remain a strong leader:

- an on-line leadership development tool kit was introduced to promote self-directed skill development
- an assessment service was initiated to provide multi-source feedback based on

department or APS competencies

- the senior and executive managers' development program was reviewed and updated to better align with learner needs and APS competencies
- the ambassador program will allow APS employees to be actively involved in marketing the APS for recruitment purposes
- and a more contemporary look was given to all recruitment advertising.

## Where do we go from here?

The external review team recommended "... although the government's priorities would change from year to year, prior years' priorities should continue to be reported internally in succeeding years. This would ensure that good work is not lost, but is further shepherd-ed to conclusion." For 1999/00, two of the 1998/99 priorities remain and two new ones have been added to the government's business plan:

- the corporate human resource development strategy
- children's services
- knowledge and innovation
- and capital planning.

As the external review team recommended, shared services and People and Prosperity will continue to be important issues written into current departmental business plans. ■



# WORKING SMARTER

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

**When you work toward creating a strong, positive culture in your department, you are helping yourself, your employees and your organization move toward a winning solution.**

The stereotype of the government worker is well known and often symbolized in the visual image of six workers and one shovel. Perhaps this was true at some point, but today's cost-conscious public service simply cannot operate like this. Why does this image continue, and what can you as an APS manager do about it? The answer may lie within the concept of organizational culture.

Organizational culture is often considered to be 'the way we do things around here.' According to Steven McShane, author and Simon Fraser University professor, it's "the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs considered to be the correct way of thinking about and acting on problems and opportunities facing the organization." To Alberta government employees today, at any level, it may imply a need for a new culture, a culture far removed from the stereotype (a culture that's more than working smarter, more than trying to do more with less). It's also about accepting economic realities and still working toward the sometimes elusive win-win solution, where everyone is happy with the outcome.

So what can a strong, positive culture do for today's Alberta public service?

*Aside from dispelling the stereotype, it can accomplish the following:*

- Work for the organization, rather than against it.
- Provide a real economic value to the organization by giving it a competitive advantage, which works well in the public arena. Alberta taxpayers have a right to expect their government to be cost effective and efficient in providing services.
- Engender employee loyalty, which supports current Alberta public service retention needs.
- Create a work environment where people want to be. As a result, there tends to be a decline in the incidence of employee absenteeism and tardiness, which will reduce costs.
- Strengthen the bonds between employees, which increases the effectiveness of communication and cooperation.

Organizational culture more often than not is passed from one employee to another in a top-down fashion. As an APS manager, living the Making Alberta stronger theme and focusing on the concept of one employer may help you develop

a stronger, more positive culture within your department.

To test how it is working for you, consider answering the questions below. The more "yes" responses, the stronger and more positive your department's culture.

### Organizational Culture Quiz

**Ask yourself, do you and the people in your department...**

1. have a good understanding of your organization's visions and goals?
2. conscientiously work toward attaining these goals?
3. tend to think long-term about where the department is going?
4. practice effective communication to ensure that departmental and employee needs are heard?
5. focus on meeting the needs of both internal and external clients of your organization?
6. work at developing effective relationships that foster a spirit of mutual co-operation and respect?
7. have a sense of "team" both within your department and across departments?
8. serve as positive leadership models?
9. dare to be innovative and embrace change?
10. seek personal growth and developmental opportunities?

How did you measure up? To some, it may mean a change in attitude and behavior. To others, it may mean maintaining your current culture. You can use the APS competencies as a guide, and remind yourself often that your professional success and the success of the Alberta public service are linked. ■



# Solidifying Your Career

**While we all think about a job change from time to time, many of us fail to take action to ensure we maintain our employability.**

**H**ave you ever wondered what you would do if you had to change jobs tomorrow? Maybe you're being encouraged to try something new as a developmental opportunity, maybe your field of expertise is becoming obsolete, or maybe you need to leave the province for personal reasons, which would mean seeking employment outside of the Alberta public service.

Elizabeth Hurley does more than think about it. As a partner in the Edmonton office of Davies Park, executive search consultants to management in private, public, and not-for-profit sectors, and as a former APS employee, she brings a unique perspective to an increasingly competitive marketplace and is an expert in solidifying careers. "People looking to make a career change, or to ensure continued growth in the APS, might do well to look at the following skills," says Hurley. "They could be the key to success."

## 1. Develop an Entrepreneurial Outlook

- Look at initiatives and situations with an entrepreneurial view; think outside the box.
- Take some risks.

## 2. Think like a CEO

- Organizations expect people at all levels to have visioning capabilities and be able to contribute.

## 3. Think Laterally

- Appreciate the broad picture, but at the same time, know what 'leading edge' is within your area of expertise. Where are the benchmarks?
- Commit to continuous learning.

## 4. Market Yourself and the Organization

- Present the appropriate corporate image and demonstrate an ability to relate to all levels in the organization with ease. Organizations are always looking for partnerships/alliances, such as with post-secondary institutions, so the ability to connect, to network effectively, is vital.

## 5. Prepare for Change

- Be comfortable using all the technological tools of the day. Organizations rely heavily on these for communication purposes and for getting the work done.

## 6. Pay Attention to Corporate Responsibility

- There is a greater emphasis today for corporations to pay attention to corporate responsibility for the environment and to society (give something back to the community).

## 7. Emphasize Results

- Be comfortable making decisions without exploring every avenue. Do it now!



Elizabeth Hurley

Hurley admits that there are biases coming out of the public sector as there are biases coming out of the private sector. But in the end, "there really are a lot of crossovers between public and private sector employment skills and we have seen many successful transitions."

Over the past year, the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy has been focused on finding ways for all Alberta public service employees to look at their own learning and development in response to demographic pressures, growing competition for scarce human resources and rapidly changing skills needs.

As the APS moves toward a greater business orientation in providing services to the public sector, greater competition for manpower will occur with the private sector. Whatever APS employees are currently doing, they can be assured that without continual development they may not be doing enough.

What have you done recently to update your skills? Have you taken advantage of Assessment Services, or checked out the Leadership Development Web site? If you're wondering what else you can do to improve your employment skills, check with your HR department. ■

## CONNEXUS

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Al O'Brien receives his Award

## Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence to Al O'Brien

The Honourable H.A. (Bud) Olson presented the 1998 Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Administration on behalf of the Alberta Chapters of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada to Al O'Brien, then Deputy Provincial Treasurer, on March 15, 1999, at Government House.

Premier Ralph Klein nominated Mr. O'Brien for the award in recognition of his groundbreaking efforts in changing the financial management of Alberta's public sector. He was instrumental in preparing Alberta for the new global economy by designing a more responsive and accountable approach to financial planning

and reporting. In the years since these new financial management programs were instituted, Alberta has become a role model for other public administrations around the world.

Mr. O'Brien's career in the public service spanned three decades and three administrations. He led the Alberta Treasury Department with innovation and creativity in revolutionizing the management of financial matters in the public sector, including the introduction of business planning and performance measures in 1993-94.

The Alberta Lieutenant-Governor's award was established in 1986 when the Edmonton and Calgary Regional IPAC Groups of the Institute of Public

Administration (IPAC) proposed that a provincial award, similar to the Vanier Medal, be developed and presented to recognize outstanding achievement by public servants in this province. The purpose of the Lieutenant-Governor's Award is to recognize, and make known to other public administrators and Alberta citizens, the achievements of our "unsung heroes" in the public service in Alberta.

Each year, nominations are sought from senior officials in government, presidents of universities and colleges, mayors of Alberta towns and cities, chairs of IPAC regional groups in Alberta, and provincial and municipal boards, agencies, and associations. A provincial selection committee representing the Edmonton and Calgary Regional IPAC Groups reviews nominations for the award.

*The criteria for selection are as follows:*

- the award is open to public servants from the federal, provincial, municipal, and academic spheres in Alberta
- nominees must be nominated for their contributions or for their work and achievements in public administration
- and all nominations must be fully documented.

The award is not open to executive members of IPAC while they hold office or to individuals actively engaged in politics. ■

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## UPCOMING

### This fall marks the start of another year for the highly recommended Senior & Executive Managers' Development Program.

"When it comes to executive development in Canada, this program leads the nation," said Public Service Commissioner Jim Dixon. "It was developed in association with the University of Alberta specifically for Alberta public service senior and executive managers. From the outset, the university has shown a true commitment to the program's success and I am confident you will find your participation an important, meaningful experience."

*For more information about the program, please call Sheryl Wolowyk at the University of Alberta (780) 492-0368 or Sylvia Parsons/Barbara Cook at the Personnel Administration Office (780) 420-4369.*